



# **A Journey Towards Freedom**

**A Haggadah  
for women  
who have  
experienced  
domestic  
violence**

*Debra B. Berman*

## ***Pirke Imahot – The Wisdom of Our Mothers***

May we be like Sarah,  
who laughed  
and kept a light heart,  
even if it was just in disbelief  
that God would allay her barrenness.

May we be like Rebecca  
who listened to God  
even when the words  
made no sense at all:  
that the younger would rule the older,  
and be the father of a great people.

May we be like Leah and like Rachel  
in their loyalty and love for one another,  
even in the midst of difficult times.

May we be like Ruth  
in daily choosing for ourselves  
to live as Jews even on those days  
that there are easier options.

May we be like Esther who recognized  
not only the power of her beauty,  
but also used her courage  
and strength of will to save our people.

May we be like Miriam,  
free to speak up  
not only for ourselves,  
but for justice for all.

May we be like  
our great-grandmothers,  
conversos secretly maintaining  
Judaism at home,  
shepherding their families  
through Pogroms and Holocausts  
and finally across oceans,  
so that their children could be Jews.

May we be like our mothers  
and grandmothers,  
who gave us the power  
to think for ourselves  
and the love of God  
so that we choose this faith freely.

May we be like Shifra and Puah:  
Gently birthing ourselves  
to fully become women of value,  
our worth beyond rubies  
for all whom we touch.

Linda R. Bookey

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For information about ordering the poster, please contact Linda Bookey ([pirke\\_imahot@msn.com](mailto:pirke_imahot@msn.com)).

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# **A Journey Towards Freedom: A Haggadah for Women Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence**

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***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead***



## Introduction

Welcome to *A Journey Towards Freedom: A Haggadah for Women Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence*.

We created this Haggadah to illuminate the parallels between our people's ancient story of liberation from Egypt and the stories of courageous Jewish women who have experienced domestic violence. In the telling of both our personal and communal journeys from oppression towards freedom, we create a community that affirms the participation of us all in the movement towards the Promised Land. In this celebration of spiritual strength, hope, and community, healing becomes possible.

We share this Haggadah because:

- The words of the women found in this Haggadah are gifts for women who have experienced abuse.
- All can learn from the words of survivors of domestic violence.
- This Haggadah raises awareness about domestic violence in the Jewish community.
- Jewish women currently experiencing domestic violence may feel alone; by using this Haggadah, Jewish women may connect to one another and break the isolation caused by domestic violence.
- It merges contemporary rituals for creating community and experiencing healing with ancient texts and traditions, reminding us that Judaism is relevant to our daily lives.
- The music, prayers, and messages of this Haggadah instill a sense of hope that the journey towards freedom is, in itself, healing.

Passover is the Jewish people's festival of freedom, celebrating the exodus and liberation of our Israelite ancestors from slavery in Egypt. Passover is the festival of springtime, the season of rebirth and renewal of the natural world as well as that of our people. Central to Passover is the seder, which means order, an evening shared in community with special foods, prayers, songs and an interactive telling of the story of the exodus. The seder has evolved over time, providing a framework for our telling that is open and inclusive.

The purpose and intention of our yearly participation in the Passover seder is not simply to recall or re-enact our people's ancient story of liberation. Rather, we engage creatively with our texts, traditions, each other and our own experiences. In doing so, we foster the journey towards freedom. For Jewish women who have experienced domestic violence, Egypt was not some distant place or time; it is happening now. In Passover's themes of liberation from oppression, the journey from slavery to freedom, rebirth and renewal, the holiday provides a powerful Jewish context for healing from domestic violence.

Alison Iser, a Jewish woman working as a battered women's advocate, saw the connection between Passover and domestic violence. She recognized the seder's potential to provide healing. In the summer of 1999, she contacted Michelle Lifton, the program coordinator of Seattle's Jewish Family Service's Project DVORA, Domestic Violence Outreach Response and Advocacy. The two met for lunch and Alison presented her proposal for creating a community-wide seder for survivors of domestic violence. They quickly agreed to move forward. The next step was to find a rabbi who was knowledgeable about domestic violence and wanted to collaborate with them. Rabbi Lisa Gelber enthusiastically joined the group. Alison and Michelle formed a seder planning committee by recruiting Jewish domestic violence survivors, Jewish advocates from domestic violence agencies, and women who worked within Jewish organizations and synagogues. This effort resulted in a committee of eight

amazing women who bridged the gap between secular domestic violence agencies, survivors of domestic violence, and Jewish organizations.

The committee established the following goals for the seder:

- ♦ To explore the themes of oppression and liberation as they relate to the experience of domestic violence by using the structure of the Passover seder.
- ♦ To identify Judaism as a source of spiritual strength and as a means of eliminating domestic violence and all oppressions.
- ♦ To address the spiritual needs of those who have experienced domestic violence.
- ♦ To break the isolation intrinsic to domestic violence by creating community.

The committee obtained financial support from the Seattle Jewish community and the domestic violence community, both of whom embraced our goals. The community clamored for additional ways to contribute. This was the start of annual mitzvah projects. Each year, groups within the Jewish community, such as senior programs and Hebrew school classes, create gifts for the seder participants. These have included matzah covers, seder plates, Elijah cups, journals, and potted parsley. In turn, members of the committee provide domestic violence education for contributing groups. Community involvement around the seder has been instrumental in raising awareness about domestic violence and has provided support to Jewish domestic violence survivors. As stated by one seder participant, “Knowing that this community actively supported this event gives me a feeling of love and nourishment. In a time of difficulty, my community is there for me.”

The seder continues to grow each year, as does the number of rabbis and organizations supporting this event. After each seder, the committee reconvenes to review the seder evaluations. Each year’s seder is adapted to respond to that feedback. Critical to the success of the seder was the creation of a Haggadah that would draw specifically on the themes and metaphors of the telling of the Passover story as they relate to the stories of domestic violence survivors. The Haggadah identifies four distinct markers along the path towards healing: In Egypt, Leaving Egypt, In the Desert, Approaching the Promised Land.

“Haggadah” comes from the Hebrew *hageed*, “to tell.” On Passover, we tell of our journey from slavery to freedom, from oppression to liberation. After the success of the first seder in April of 2000, it became clear that additional opportunities for domestic violence survivors to tell of their journey would increase the meaning and healing-power of the seder. Writing workshops were instituted to solicit survivors’ insights into the themes of the Passover seder. Many of their words were incorporated into the Haggadah, adding to the impact and the authenticity of the text. (Materials from the 2001 and 2002 writing workshops can be found in Appendix I). This Haggadah does not distinguish the words of domestic violence survivors. Their writing is integrated throughout the text. As we, seder participants, go around the table and take turns reading paragraph after paragraph of our collective Haggadah story, the separations between battered and non-battered women are diminished, reminding us of the Passover message that none of us are free until we are all free.

All of us journey in life; while our paths may differ, a communal expression of our individual journeys towards liberation fosters friendship, sustenance, and an opportunity to leave some of our burdens along the way. Freedom is about experience and participation. By sharing our voice, both through the words of others and our own, we add to the many layered story of our Jewish people. Wherever you are on that journey, we invite you to join with us and make this your Haggadah as well.

## THE TIME IS NOW

The time is now.  
We've gathered 'round.  
So bring all your gifts,  
And bring all your burdens with you.

No need to hide.  
Arms open wide.  
We gather as one.  
To make a makom kadosh.

We come to tell.  
We come to hear.  
We come to teach, to learn,  
We come to grow,  
And so we say.

The time is now.  
Sing to the One.  
God's Presence is here,  
Sh'china, You will dwell among us.

We'll make this space  
A holy place,  
So separate, so whole,  
Rejoice every soul  
Who enters here.



## THE ORDER

*We bless one another  
We wash each other's hands.  
We dip greens in salt water  
And wash pain with tears.*

*We divide matzot  
And hide our past.  
We tell Haggadah  
And each her own tale.*

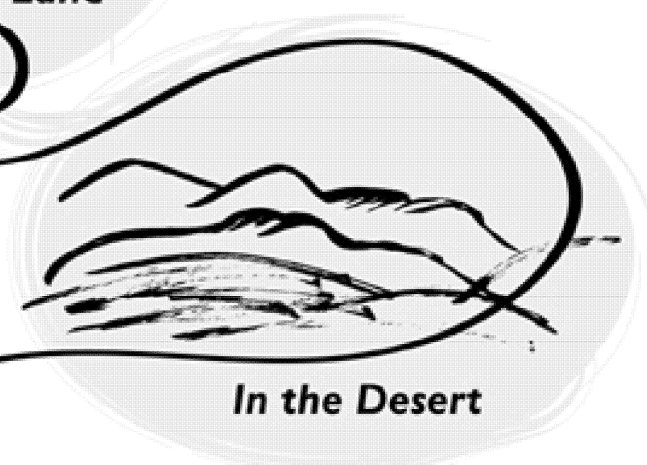
*We bless matzot  
And paths in the sand.  
We eat maror,  
Of the bitter past.*

*We set the table  
For the women's supper.  
We find the halved matza  
That dropped from our lives.*

*We end with grace,  
With blessing and song.*

*We greet the night  
And the following dawn  
In the bosom of friends,  
The seder of our own.*







Welcome to our Seder. Together, we embark on a journey, as did our ancestors thousands of years ago. While they traveled from enslavement in Egypt towards the freedom of the Promised Land, we travel from our experience of domestic violence towards our ideal of liberation. As we journey, we focus on four points along the path.

We begin **in Egypt** where we have experienced the enslavement of abuse. Tonight, we acknowledge that we do not have to live this way.

Next, we explore **leaving Egypt**. Just as our ancestors summoned up the courage to delve into the unknown, may we also discover that we have the courage to change our lives, that we have other options.

Once we depart from Egypt, we find ourselves wandering **in the desert**. The desert presented difficulties for our ancestors. The ancient Israelites were lost and scared, uncertain if they should continue or return to the familiarity of Egypt. We, too, experience challenges in the desert. Some of us may want to turn back. May we face our challenges and use this transitional time as an opportunity for healing and growth.

Finally, we **approach the Promised Land**. Approaching the Promised Land means moving forward. It means we can achieve liberation.

At any given time, we all are at different places along the path out of Egypt, yet we do not have to feel alone. Tonight we learn from the experience of our ancestors, traveling together to break the isolation of abuse and share the strength of our numbers.

The Talmud teaches, "It was for the sake of the righteous women of that generation that we were redeemed from Egypt." Just as we were redeemed because of the acts of our foremothers, so too will our actions bring redemption to our daughters, the redemption promised by God: **I will bring you out; I will deliver you; I will redeem you; I will take you to be my people.**

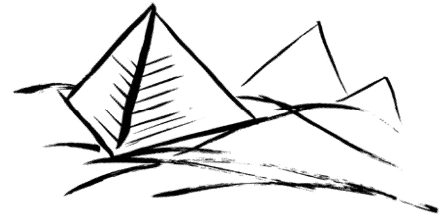
At the Passover seder we drink four cups of wine or juice. Each cup symbolizes one of God's four promises of redemption. Redemption is a continual experience. It calls for expression in both word and deed. It reminds us of the important teaching of our tradition, "You are not obligated to complete the task, yet neither are you free to neglect it." (Avot 2:21). At our seder, each cup is a celebration of our progress towards freedom, our movement towards individual and collective redemption.

## KADESH - קדש THE FIRST CUP

### ***In Egypt –***

***We experience abuse. We do not have to live this way.***

In Egypt we experience emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Someone tries to control us, to keep us broken and enslaved. God calls out to us, "I am Adonai; **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of Egypt." We hear, **"We do not have to live this way."**



In order to survive, I did what I was told. I did whatever I thought I needed to do, said whatever I thought I needed to say – to get through the night without being hurt.

אֲנִי יי וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלַת מִצְרַיִם.  
*Ani Adonai, v'hotzeiti etchem mitachat sivlot Mitzrayim.*

As we raise this first cup, we acknowledge that we have been abused, we see that we are not alone in this, we sanctify this day and our experience. We sing together [here and throughout the seder, choose one of the two versions of blessings]:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְהַלֵּל  
בְּסוֹבֵעַ וּלְשִׂמְחַ בְּפְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu l'Hallel  
b'Sovei-ah u'L'sameakh Bifri HaGafen.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst  
as we celebrate abundance and rejoice in the  
fruit of the vine.

\* \* \* \* \*

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ  
בְּשִׁלְמוֹת בְּלִכְתֵּינוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ חַיֵּינוּ בְּזִמַּן  
הַזֶּה.

*Nazmin et M'Kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu B'Shleimut  
B'Lakhteinu B'Derekh Hayeinu Bazman Hazeh.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst as  
we embrace this moment on our journey at this  
time in our lives.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא  
פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Borai  
P'ri Hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, who guides the  
universe and creates the fruit of the vine.

\* \* \* \* \*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
Sheheheyanu v'Keeyimanu v'higeeyanu  
lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, who  
guides the Universe, keeping us in life,  
granting us sustenance, and helping us  
to arrive at this time.

***We drink together.***

## **URCHATZ - ורחץ**

### **WASHING OUR HANDS**

Being in Egypt means spending our hours and days enslaved by the demands of everyone else. Tonight we recognize our own needs and desires. We allow ourselves to give and receive blessings. We wash away the past by pouring water over each other's hands, purifying ourselves by receiving from one another.

### **MI SHEBEIRACH**

Mi-she-bei-rach a-vo-tei-nu  
M'kor ha-bra-cha l'i-mo-tei-nu  
May the source of strength  
Who blessed the ones before us  
Help us find the courage  
To make our lives a blessing  
And let us say, Amen.

Mi she-bei-rach i-mo-tei-nu  
M'kor ha-bra-cha l'a-vo-tei-nu  
Bless those in need of healing  
With r'fu-a sh'lei-ma  
The renewal of body  
The renewal of spirit  
And let us say, Amen.





## KARPAS - כרפס

### DIPPING OF THE GREENS

We ready ourselves to leave Egypt by looking for signs of hope. We look for signs that we will be okay. Karpas is a sign. It is the greens of spring.

To me, the greens of spring are especially significant. There was a time after leaving my abuser that I still gave him so much of my power I subconsciously thought that he could keep the spring from returning. Each year now, when I see the green of spring, I rejoice at my acknowledgment that I have faced my worst fear. I have come out on the other side of believing in my abuser and place the credit where it belongs.

Although we rejoice in the renewal of spring, we do not hide from the pain of enslavement. Our ancestors cried out to God, and they were saved. We cry out so that we may also move forward. We dip the karpas in salt water, immersing our hope into our tears, recognizing that emancipation is a gift only to the enslaved.

*Blessed are the tears, for they represent my freedom to feel*

*Blessed are the tears, for they indicate that I am self-aware*

*Blessed are the tears, for they prove to me that I have found myself*

*Blessed are the tears for they are proof that I am alive*

We dip the greens in salt water and recite together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְהַלֵּל  
וּלְשִׂמְחַ בְּמַתָּנוֹת הָאָרֶץ.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu L'Hallel  
U'L'Sameakh B'Matanot Ha-Aretz.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst as  
we celebrate renewal and rejoice in the gifts  
of the earth.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא  
פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Borai  
Pri Ha-adamah.*

We praise You, Eternal God, who guides the  
Universe, and creates the fruit of the earth.

**We eat the greens together.**

## YAHATZ - יחץ

### BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

There is no one among us whose body or soul is not permeated by cracks, some wide, some narrow, some deep, others shallow. At times, so many of us feel fragile, fractured, wanting only to gather up the shattered pieces. If only we could put them back together, to be smooth, unblemished once more. But, our journey is not back into the past, but forward, into a future where we transform our pieces into a whole that is both strong and weathered.

As we break the middle *matzah* in two, the larger of the broken halves becomes the *afikoman*. It is hidden away and must be found and shared at the conclusion of the meal in order to complete the seder. As Arthur Waskow writes, "*Matzah* is the bread of affliction so long as anyone keeps the whole thing for her/himself, and becomes the bread of freedom only when we share it -- with the Hidden One and with each other."

We all have qualities that are gifts to share. Let us each take a slip of paper and write one strength that we might offer as a blessing to someone else, our own personal *afikoman*. We hide these away, offering them as gifts when the *afikoman* is eaten.

*(collect slips for distribution later during "Tzafun - Retrieving The Hidden Matzah")*

As the remaining *matzot* are raised for all to see, let us sing together:

<i>Ha lachma anya</i>	הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא
<i>di achalu</i>	דִּי אֲכָלוּ
<i>achalu avahatana</i>	אֲכָלוּ אַבְהָתָנָא
<i>b'ar'a, b'ar'a d'meetzrayim</i>	בָּאֲרַעָא בָּאֲרַעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם

*This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.  
Let all who are hungry in body and spirit join with us and eat.  
Let all who are in need of comfort and support come to share our Passover.*

*This year we are here, next year in Israel.  
Today we are bound. Tomorrow may we be free.*

## THE JOURNEY SONG

Where does the journey begin  
Where will we go  
Hours pass, the answers might change  
As we keep moving along.

Stand at the shores of the sea  
Fearful, we want to turn back  
The sea parts, our eyes fill with wonder  
As we go along on our journey.

Where does the journey begin  
Where will we go  
Days pass, the answers can change  
As we keep moving along

Stepping into the unknown  
Hear the echoes of Miriam's song  
We awaken, retelling our stories  
As we go along on our journey.

Where does the journey begin  
Where will we go  
Years pass, the answers have changed  
As we keep moving along.

Cross the sea, it's the time  
To sing a song we are free  
Dance with your timbrels in hand  
There's no turning back from this journey

Where does the journey begin  
Where will we go  
Hours pass, the answers might change  
As we keep moving along.

Days pass, the answers can change  
As we keep moving along  
Years pass, the answers have changed  
As we keep moving along.

## **ASKING THE FOUR QUESTIONS**

As we continue our journey from oppression to liberation, as we develop our spirit of rebirth and redemption, we may ask ourselves questions along the way. As survivors of affliction and those who wish to provide support and sustenance, we join our voices together in unity and proclaim:

*Now we affirm the right to our own questions.*

*Now we affirm the right to our own answers.*

*Now we affirm the right not to know the answers.*

*Now we affirm the right not to have known the answers.*

*Now we affirm the right to ask new questions and find new answers.*

Let the intelligence, joy and spirit of every woman in this room join together to guide us as we continue our search. May we believe in our answers. May we have faith in our resolutions. May we honor our truths.



***We were slaves in Egypt - now may we be free!***



## FOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

*The caged bird says: you see my food, but you do not see my captivity.  
(Kohelet Rabbah)*

The Haggadah speaks of four children: one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to ask. Tonight we speak of four community members and their responses to domestic violence. We acknowledge that at different times in our lives we all have played the part of each of the four community members.

**The Wise Community Member** asks, “How can we, as individuals and as a community, address domestic violence?” This community member accepts personal and communal responsibility, recognizing that when one is oppressed we are all oppressed.

*To this community member you can explain that the social institutions, laws, and norms within our society, as well as the attitudes and behaviors within our interpersonal relationships, perpetuate domestic violence. You can discuss ways to create change within your life and community.*

**The Wicked Community Member** asks, “Why don’t they just leave?”

This person adds to the shame and isolation of those experiencing abuse by blaming them for the abusive behavior of other people.

*To this community member you can respond by saying, “Why is it that you don’t ask why people batter? You must hold those who batter accountable for their actions while creating safety and autonomy for those who experience abuse.”*



**The Simple Community Member** asks, “What is domestic violence?”

*To this community member you can say, “Domestic violence occurs when a person uses a pattern of coercive behaviors to gain and maintain control over an intimate partner. These behaviors hurt us all.”*

**The Community Member Who Does Not Know How to Ask** can be told:

*“Silence is part of the problem; it benefits those who batter. Domestic violence exists in every community. Freedom requires the end of violence in all of our relationships and institutions.”*

## THE TEN PLAGUES

At Passover, we speak of the ten plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians. As we remember each plague, we remove a drop of wine or juice from our glass to symbolize that our joy is diminished when others suffer.

Tonight, we name ten types of oppression that plague our society, causing all of us to suffer, keeping us in Egypt. We know that domestic violence does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a world where power and privilege are misused by individuals and societal institutions. We live in a world where injustice is accepted. This perpetuates domestic violence, poisoning society and threatening the welfare of our community.

Recognizing the power in naming oppressions, we reclaim our own power by naming them aloud, affirming that they exist, proclaiming that they are wrong. As we spill a drop of juice for each, we acknowledge that the existence of these oppressions diminishes all of our lives.

Ableism  
Ageism  
Antisemitism  
Classism  
Heterosexism  
Homophobia  
Imperialism  
Racism  
Sexism  
Xenophobia

*The above list is incomplete. As we go around the room, we invite those who wish to name additional afflictions that plague our lives.*

***By sanctifying the humanity of all, we free ourselves.***

## LO DAYEINU/DAYEINU

(Not Enough/Enough)

In the eyes of my abuser, it was never enough,

if I was always obedient.....	LO DAYEINU
if I was always cheerful.....	LO DAYEINU
if I was always perfectly groomed and dressed.....	LO DAYEINU
if I never disagreed with a word my partner said.....	LO DAYEINU
if I was a gourmet cook day and night.....	LO DAYEINU
if I was the best sex partner possible.....	LO DAYEINU
if I was the best partner in the world.....	LO DAYEINU

In the eyes of my Creator, it is always enough that I am

made in the Divine image.....	DAYEINU!
on the journey.....	DAYEINU!
Me.....	DAYEINU!



### DAYEINU. ENOUGH. WHAT IS ENOUGH?

Not Next Year in Jerusalem;  
Not a successfully completed Seder;  
Not even the food, wine, and companionship that the holiday brings;  
But rather, right here, right now.  
This is enough.  
No one is yelling at me. No one is calling me names. No one is threatening me.  
**Dayeinu!**

**Is that enough? Not anymore.**

We deserve much, much more than simply to “not be abused”.  
We deserve for surviving abuse to no longer be a stigma.  
We deserve courts that find every type of abuse  
to be relevant, serious, and punishable.  
We deserve for every man, woman, and child  
to be educated on how to recognize abuse.  
We deserve to all find safety, love, laughter, and peace.

Only then....**Dayeinu!!**

## **פסח מצה ומרור - PESACH, MATZAH, MAROR**

Rabban Gamliel taught: if on Passover, you do not explain these three things, you have not fulfilled your obligation:

The Passover Sacrifice -- *Pesach*

The Unleavened Bread -- *Matzah*

The Bitter Herbs -- *Maror*

### **The Passover Sacrifice - What We Gave Up to Survive**

Each Israelite family joined together in the Passover meal. Gathering inside the home helped them to prepare for their imminent departure. In order to break free from the Egyptians, in order to leave Mitzrayim, they had to leave what was comfortable, what was familiar. Survival sometimes requires sacrifice.

In order to survive I sacrificed a great deal.  
I sacrificed a dream of happily ever after.  
I continue to sacrifice instant gratification of my dreams.  
I gave up my home, my belongings, and the city I loved.  
I gave up my pet, my little dog.  
Initially, we lost nearly our entire support system.  
My greatest sacrifice has been full-time motherhood.  
But I did not give up my marriage - he did that.

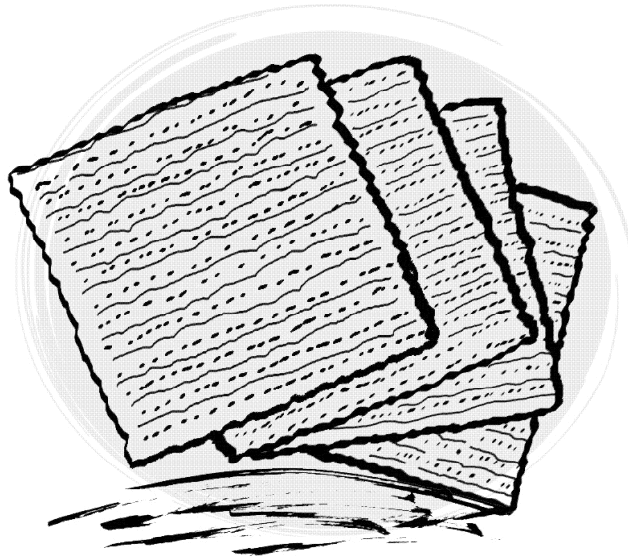
### **The Matzah - What We Must Have to Survive**

Our ancestors did not have time to let their bread rise when fleeing Egypt. The *matzah*, unleavened bread, reminds us of their haste. It is the minimal sustenance they took with them in order to survive.

I found the sustenance I needed to survive in a wide variety of places - from the kind woman at the food bank who treated me like a human being and snuck me soy milk every week, to the Domestic Violence program that helped me find clothes, to the group who paid for my eye exam and glasses. Sometimes a kind word from a

stranger, the homeless teenager who wanted to give me her only flower, the Vietnam Veteran who shared his rage at injustice with me, the homeless man who sang me a song and insisted to me that I had worth. Many days it was the animals and the children I encountered who lifted my spirits with their presence and kept me pressing on.

I suppose the sustenance that I need to survive is within. I was born with it. It is supported by the understanding of others with similar experiences.



### **The Maror - What We Need to Remember to Ensure Our Survival**

The bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness of slavery that our ancestors endured.

Although it is unpleasant to dwell on that part of my past, in remembering the abuse and being mindful of how it began, what it was like, and the effect it has had on my life, I gain the strength and perseverance to not let it happen again. It is my own personal "Lest we forget."

My abuser continues to try to convince me that he has changed, that he is different, kind, non-abusive. If I did not have the memories of being threatened with a gun or a knife, being pushed to the ground, then what would keep me from returning? Remembering is not dwelling. It is taking responsibility.

At some point, remembering my pain will also be a reminder of how far I have come.

## THE CALL TO HALLEL - הלל<sup>11</sup>

In each generation we are asked to remember Israel's oppression and courage. Some of us make the journey personally. I had to get out of the narrow, constricted place, the place that had squeezed my being and soul. I lived in *Mitzrayim*, a servant to fear, but *Mitzrayim* was my home; the place where there should have been peace. I was afraid to go, but more afraid to stay. When I looked at my baby it was clear; I had to go. How could I let her grow up in the atmosphere of hate and oppression? I don't know how his heart got so hardened, how he became immune to our crying. I only know that my telling, begging, and cajoling moved him not at all.

I had to go. It would only get worse. Oppression doesn't come all at once like a broken arm. When I look back I can see the steps down into despair. I can name some of them, but it is hard to find the first step. The one where you say, "There! That's when it began." I felt it for a long time, but one day, like the sky on a cold night, everything was clear. *Blessed One guide us on our journey, we have to go.*

Tonight, as we embrace the journey from oppression to liberation, from slavery to freedom, we are reminded of those who are not here, those who cannot join us at this table. We embrace their names and their faces, along with our own, calling upon God to help us to move through sorrow towards joy, going forth from bondage to redemption, journeying from darkness to light.

*Va'anachnu n'varech Ya*  
*Mei'ata v'ad olam,*  
*Halleluya*

וְאֵנַחְנוּ נְבָרֵךְ יְיָ  
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם  
הַלֵּל<sup>11</sup>יָהּ

***Va'anachnu n'varech Ya - We praise God now and forever!!***

## KOS SHEINI - כוס שני THE SECOND CUP



### Leaving Egypt

**We can create change.**

God promises, **"I will deliver you"** out of Egypt. Leaving Egypt means something different for each of us. For some, it means moving out, ending a relationship, getting a divorce. For others, it means creating new boundaries, changing patterns, embarking on a new path. Leaving Egypt is an acknowledgement that we have been somewhere we no longer want to be. It is the action - physical or emotional - that leads us away from the narrow place, *Mitzrayim*.

It is the midst of winter. An avalanche has hit your life. The road is closed, but spring will come, the snow will melt, the road will become clear. You will move on.

As we raise the second cup to our lips, we acknowledge that **we can create change** in our lives. **We do have options.** We have started on a new path. We can choose the way.

וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדָתָם

*V'heetzalti etchem mai'avodatam*

*"I will deliver you from their work and bondage"*

We raise our cups and sing together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְהַלֵּל  
בְּסוּבֵעַ וּלְשִׂמְחַת בְּפִרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu l'Hallel b'Sovei-ah  
u'L'sameakh Bifri HaGafen.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst as  
we celebrate abundance and rejoice  
in the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech  
HaOlam, Borai P'ri Hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,  
who guides the universe and  
creates the fruit of the vine.

**We drink together.**

## רחצה - RAHTZA WASHING OUR HANDS

We are leaving Egypt. When we engage in the traditional ritual of hand-washing, we purify ourselves of the violations we have experienced in body, mind, and spirit.

We wash our hands and offer the blessing:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ  
בְּשַׁחֲרֵרֵינוּ בְּצָרֵינוּ וּבְמַסְעֵינוּ  
בְּרַפּוּאָה שְׁלִימָה.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu B'Shakhreinu  
B'Tzareinu Uvmasa-einu  
Birfuah Shleimah.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into  
our midst as we release our burdens  
and move towards healing.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצָוָנוּ  
עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

Praised are You, Eternal God,  
who guides the Universe, and sanctifies us  
through the mitzvah of washing our hands.

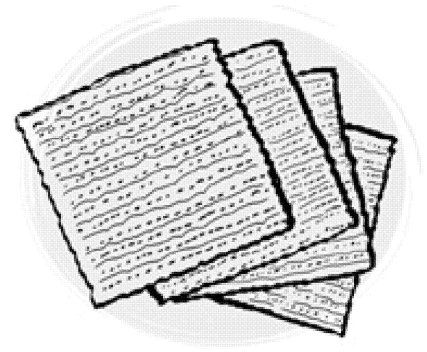




## MOTZI MATZAH - מוציא מצה

### BLESSING OVER THE MATZAH

*Matzah* is called the bread of our affliction. It is fragile, crumbly, and without great taste. It is also the bread of telling and of answers - sustenance for our minds and our souls. "Journey food," it reminds us of the simplicity with which our ancestors set out into the wilderness with meager provisions necessary for survival. With the *matzah*, we acknowledge our courage to sit at the table and remember, the opportunity to join together and look for answers, and the chance to internalize our vision of freedom as steps towards redemption.



We raise the matzah and recite together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְשׁוּב  
מִהַמְקוֹרוֹת לְקַיִם קִשְׁרֵי אֲהָבָה.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu Lashuv  
Mai-Hamkorot L'Kayeim Kishrei Ahavah.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our  
midst as we draw upon our roots,  
sustaining our loving connections.

\* \* \* \* \*

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ בְּהִזְנֵת  
נַפְשֵׁינוּ וּבִקְבֻלַּת הַתַּחֲדָשִׁיתֵינוּ.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu B'Hazanat  
Nafsheinu Uv-Kabbalat Hat-Hadshi-teinu.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst  
as we nourish our souls and welcome  
the blessing of transformation.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא  
לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Praised are You, Eternal God,  
who guides the Universe, and brings forth  
bread from the earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, asher  
kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah.*

Praised are You, Eternal God,  
who guides the Universe, and sanctifies us  
with the mitzvah of eating the matzah.

**We eat the matzah.**

## MAROR - מרור

### THE BITTER HERBS

Leaving Egypt brings us exhilaration, the joy of newfound freedom. Yet, the pain remains with us. We may feel afraid even when we seem to be safe. We may feel sad even as good things happen. This is all an authentic part of our journey.

Tonight we recognize that we are not alone in feeling this way. We acknowledge that both bitter and sweet comprise our lives. Tonight we ask ourselves, how might we find balance between seeming opposites? What are the blessings of both bitter and sweet?

Now we dip for the second time. Combining the *maror* and the *haroset*, we are reminded that even the hardest of journeys can bring hope, balance, and sweetness.

We recite together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מִקּוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ  
וְנִטְבִּיל מִן הָעֵבֶר בְּחִיזָק וּבְאַמֶּץ לְמִצַּח  
הַמִּתּוֹקוֹת שֶׁבָּנוּ בְּצֶלֶם הַשְּׁלֵמוֹת.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu V'Natbil min  
Ha-Ever V'Hizaik U'V'amatz Limtzo Ha-M'Tukot  
Shavnu B'Tzelem HaShleimut.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst as  
we dip into our past with strength and with  
courage, finding sweetness in ourselves from the  
possibility of being whole.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu al achilat maror.*

Praised are You, Eternal God, who guides  
the Universe, and sanctifies us  
with the mitzvah of eating the bitter herbs.

**We eat the bitter herbs.**

## Koreich - פֶּרֶךְ

### Hillel Sandwich

We join the bitter with the sweet to remind ourselves of the intersection of oppression and liberation. The bread of affliction becomes the bread of freedom as we journey together. This transition is not without pain. Even as freedom is regained, there are reminders of enslavement, sometimes so real we can taste them.

Tonight we taste that bitterness, that hurt. We do so knowing that we may lessen the impact by combining it with that which brings comfort. We can reach out to others for support. We can do this knowing that while it may not make the pain go away, it may make it easier to endure.

Women must know that leaving isn't easy. The road ahead is full of stones and ruts, submerged after rains, dry and dusty in drought. Her body will heal much before her soul.

But she will find friends and *shomrot* to guide her. She will find that her legs are strong, and she will stand on them. She will lead others, and they will lead yet more women, and so it will go. She will be spoken of with reverence for freeing and guiding, again and again, but only after she finds the way and her own North Star.

## THE REED SEA

As we continue to face challenges on our journey, we turn to our ancestors for guidance. Tradition teaches that when the Israelites reached the Reed Sea, the tribes argued about who would go first. They were afraid. And who could blame them. Finally, one brave soul jumped into the water. The act of one person precipitated the splitting of the sea. One person's risk was enough to create the miracle.

Liberation involves risk. It requires action. It may mean entering unfamiliar territory and going outside of our comfort zone. God, hold us safe. Keep the mouths that would insult us shut. Shield us from harm. Encircle us. Give us a supporting community. Give us insight. Give us wisdom to find our way to safety.

Come sing!

Sing... out about the lies and fear.

Sing...out about your journey.

Sing...your way free or sing your way to freedom.

Come dance!

Dance...with women who have also known private fear.

Dance... and know that you are strong enough.

Dance...and know that the universe will open for you.



As we look around, we see that we are not alone, that we can do this together. We learn from the prophet Miriam who led the Israelite women across the sea using her voice, her timbrel, and her dance towards liberation.

## MIRIAM'S SONG



*And the women dancing with their timbrels  
Followed Miriam as she sang her song.  
Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted.  
Miriam and the women danced  
And danced the whole night long.*

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety.  
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history.  
With every thread and every strand she crafted her delight.  
A woman touched with spirit, she dances toward the light.

*And the women dancing with their timbrels....*

As Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea,  
The wonder of this miracle she soon came to believe.  
Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand,  
And we would pass to freedom, and march to the promised land.

*And the women dancing with their timbrels....*

And Miriam the Prophet took her timbrel in her hand,  
And all the women followed her just as she had planned.  
And Miriam raised her voice with song.  
She sang with praise and might,  
We've just lived through a miracle, we're going to dance tonight.

*And the women dancing with their timbrels....*



**SHULCHAN OREICH**

שלחן עורך

**THE MEAL IS SERVED**

## **TZAFUN - צפון**

### **RETRIEVING THE HIDDEN MATZAH**

Earlier in the seder we broke the middle matzah which became the *afikoman* for tonight's gathering. Each of us also created our own *afikoman*, writing down a personal affirmation, a strength deep from within ourselves. Now we share both, embracing what was once lost, revealing our hidden selves.

*(distribute the slips of paper)*

Let us go around the table and share aloud the blessing, once hidden and now revealed, a gift of another woman in our midst.

---

## **BAREICH - ברך**

### **WE GIVE THANKS FOR OUR MEAL**

*Together, we join our voices to offer thanks for the abundance from which we have shared and for the blessings that are yet to come. We thank You, God, Source of life and of hope, for all sources of physical nourishment and spiritual sustenance.*

## כוס שלישי – KOS SHLISHI

### THE THIRD CUP

#### *In the Desert*

***We are in transition. We can heal.***



We find ourselves in the desert. We are in transition.

The journey from enslavement to freedom involves

wandering. We leave everything we have known and, often, everything we hold dear. Sometimes we may have to part with our children. Of course, our feet will falter. Of course, we cry.

Healing is hard. To weep, yet to hope; to quake, yet to stand firm; to reach, yet to run; to wish, yet to hide; to feel alone and to be alone, yet to touch the hand that reaches out and to accept the gifts of love. Where are the truths? How does one know? They exist with each breath of life.

I shed unexpected tears upon hearing someone else's story. Another woman who also believed that her situation was unique. Another woman who thought that she too had a weakness that somehow caused her to be victimized. And now, together, she and I cry because we realize we are not victims, but rather, somewhere along the way, we became survivors. We are not so unique that we need to feel alone.

As we drink from the third cup and recall God's promise, "**I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm," we commit ourselves to our own redemption. We recognize that community fosters healing and that we can join with each other and with God in our journey towards wholeness.

וְגָאַלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה.

*V'gaalti etchem beezroa n'tuya.*

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

We raise our cups and sing together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְהֵלֵל  
בְּסוּבֵעַ וּלְשִׂמְחַ בְּפְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu l'Hallel  
b'Sovei-ah u'L'sameakh Bifri HaGafen.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into  
our midst as we celebrate abundance  
and rejoice in the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
Borai Pri Hagafen.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God,  
who guides the Universe,  
creating the fruit of the vine.

***We drink together.***



## **AMIDAH: ON OUR FEET WE SPEAK TO YOU**

**BY MARGE PIERCY**

All living are one and holy, let us remember  
as we eat, as we work, as we walk and drive.

All living are one and holy, we must make ourselves worthy.  
We must act out justice and mercy and healing  
as the sun rises and as the sets,  
as the moon rises and the stars wheel above us,  
we must repair goodness.  
We must praise the power of the one that joins us.  
Whether we plunge in or thrust ourselves far out  
finally we reach the face of glory too bright  
for our eyes and yet we burn and we give light.

We will try to be holy,  
we will try to repair the world given to us to hand on.  
Precious is this treasure of words and knowledge and deeds  
that moves inside us.  
Holy is the hand that works for peace and for justice,  
holy is the mouth that speaks for goodness  
holy is the foot that walks toward mercy.

Let us lift each other on our shoulders and carry each other along.  
Let holiness move in us.  
Let us pay attention to its small voice.  
Let us see the light in others and honor that light.  
Remember the dead who paid our way here dearly, dearly  
and remember the unborn for whom we build our houses.

Praise the light that shines before us, through us, after us,  
Amein.



## כוס אליהו - KOS ELIJAHU

### ELIJAH'S CUP

The Prophet Elijah is associated with the coming of the Messiah, a time when the world will be at peace. Tradition holds that Elijah visits every Passover seder. His presence reminds us of the promise of redemption. Remembering and reflecting on our own experiences of abuse helps us to understand and make a difference in the lives of others. It fuels our passion to make a difference in the world. As a community, we can work together to bring peace into each other's lives. We can do our part to transform and heal the world.



Tonight, we take a step together towards that future. We pass around Elijah's cup, filling it by pouring into it from our own.

*Eliyahu Hanavi*

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא

*Eliyahu haTishbi*

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי

*Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu HaGiladi*

אֱלִיָּהוּ אֱלִיָּהוּ אֱלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי

*Bimheira v'yameinu*

בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ

*yavo eileinu*

יָבֹא אֵלֵינוּ

*im Mashiach ben David*

עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד

*im Mashiach ben David*

עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד

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## HALLEL

As we look forward towards the future, we sing praise to God.

Each of us, in our own voice, cries out:

***Halleluya!***

## כוס רביעי - KOS R'VI'EE

### THE FOURTH CUP

#### **Approaching the Promised Land**

**We are moving forward.**

**We can achieve liberation.**

At first I felt that I had been freed by someone else. But as I looked at what I had done and sacrificed for my freedom, I realized I was emancipated - I took my own freedom for myself and my daughter. It was a gift I gave myself to allow me to survive.



My spirit has finally found its voice and its legs. I know I can do things. Now I'm ready to feel the pain and finally let it go.

#### **When I'm no longer afraid...**

I will smile and walk into meetings without worrying that someone might know my secret.

I will say "leave me alone" and "not now" whenever I want.

I will go out with friends and not worry about being followed.

I will call the police.

I will park without planning how I'll get away.

I will wear whatever I want.

I will plant a garden and sing in the shower.

**We are moving forward.** We are **approaching the Promised Land**. We are not alone. God promises, **"I will take you to be my people."** We are part of a people. **We can achieve liberation** through our loving connections with each other. We see the divine in ourselves and in each other. Together **we can transform the world**.

We raise our cups and sing together:

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ לְהַלֵּל  
בְּסוּבֵי עֵץ וּלְשִׁמַּח בְּפִרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Nazmin et M'kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu l'Hallel  
b'Sovei-ah u'L'sameakh Bifri HaGafen.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our  
midst as we celebrate abundance and  
rejoice in the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam,  
Borai Pri Hagafen.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God,  
who guides the Universe, and creates  
the fruit of the vine.

**We drink together.**

## נִרְצָא - NIRTZA

### CONCLUDING THE SEDER

נִזְמִין אֶת מְקוֹר הַתִּקְוָה לְקִרְבֵּינוּ בְּשִׁלְמוֹת  
בְּלַכְתֵּינוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ חַיֵּינוּ בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Nazmin et M'Kor HaTikvah L'Kirbeinu B'Shleimut  
B'Lakhteinu B'Derekh  
Hayeinu Bazman Hazeh.*

Let us invite the Source of Hope into our midst as  
we embrace this moment on our journey  
at this time in our lives.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שֶׁהָיִינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech  
HaOlam, Sheheheyanu v'Keeyimanu  
v'higeeyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,  
who guides the Universe, keeping us in life, granting  
us sustenance,  
and helping us to arrive at this time.

May we take a moment to fully realize  
the blessing of community which surrounds us now.  
When we are faltering along our path,  
may we recall this moment and feel renewed, refreshed, strengthened and supported.  
May we turn to our community for strength during the year,  
knowing that with each step toward the Promised Land,  
we are strengthened, not only as individuals,  
but also as a community of survivors.

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### TEFILLAT HADERECH

May we be blessed as we go on our way,  
May we be guided in peace.  
May we be blessed with health and joy,  
May this be our blessing,  
Amen.

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace,  
May we be kept in safety and in love,  
May grace and compassion find their way to every soul,  
May this be our blessing,  
Amen.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS



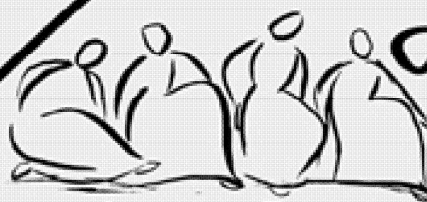
**Approaching  
the Promised Land**

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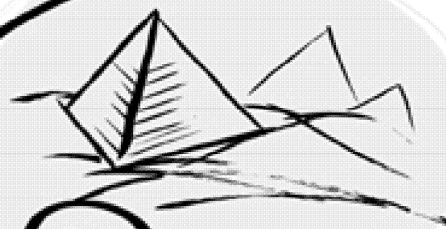
**In the Desert**

*Page 39*



**Leaving Egypt**

*Page 37*



**In Egypt**

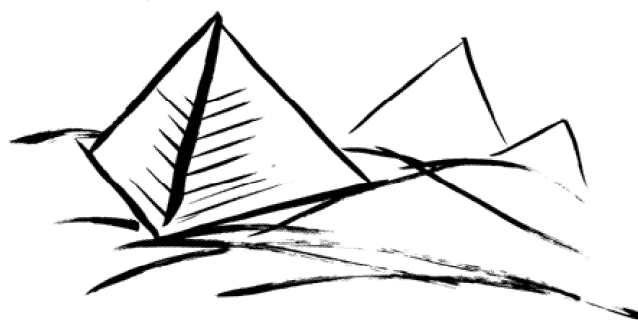
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## IN EGYPT

### Passover In Jail

#### 1st day of Pesach:

I couldn't imagine what Passover would be like in jail. I knew I would want kosher for Passover food, but a Seder? In jail? It seemed wrong until it happened.



My cellmate is a very young woman who has been interested in Judaism since she arrived six weeks ago. She has asked questions and we have had many nighttime discussions as we lay in bed. I have taught her the Sh'ma. We now say the Sh'ma together each night, she, I, and the picture of my daughter.

My Judaism called me to return a number of years ago. It whispered in my ears, nagged at the back of my brain and finally one day opened my head and heart to the notion that return was no longer optimal. It is not so hard to get me to listen these days. Now when I hear the whispers I turn toward them instead of putting a screen between us. "High Holy Days are coming. Can you feel it?" it whispers. "Passover is coming. Can you feel it?" I hear. I cling to the hope that I will be released before Passover, but something inside me prepares for the notion that I will be here. The week before Passover I started washing the walls of my cell. I wash, and the layers of pencil writings, toothpaste glue and grime fade and disappear. It doesn't start as conscious preparation. I don't want to think about Pesach in here. Nonetheless, in the middle of my cleaning it is undeniable to me that I am responding to the whisper, "Yes I can feel it coming." I wash the floor on hands and knees with a rap. There is a new level of light and relief in the cell.

*Baruch atah adonay yotzer hame 'orot.*

Blessed are you Eternal One, the shaper of heaven's light.

I am removing that which stands in the way, I am getting ready. I am eating up my cookies and giving away my crackers. I am getting ready even in here. Even in jail I clear a path toward Passover. I explain this to my cellmate.

One day the deck officer opens the doors for lunch. I have been in the day room; my cellmate has been in the cell. I come into the cell to put my books away and I find my cellmate sitting her top bunk cleaning the plastic cover on the ceiling light. I stop short. Dear G-d she is doing this for me. Thank you. I hug her. Cleaning this light is no easy task. There is probably years of toothpaste and bits of paper all over the covering where people have tried to block the light so they can sleep. There is always some level of light in the cell day or night. It takes all day, but the light is finally clean. What an amazing gift. We show off our work to our friends at the other end of the tank. The next day they say, "Come and see our light." I love ignited something and I am one of the beneficiaries of its glow.

The path to Passover is clear, I have answered the whisper but I can't imagine a Seder in this place. I understand that I am free in my mind no matter where I am, but you can't get much more physically enslaved than jail. How can I celebrate freedom in jail? Who will celebrate with me? I am the only Jew in this tank, most of these women have never even heard of Passover, let alone know its meaning. How will they sit through even an abbreviated Seder? Most of the time getting their attention long enough to finish three sentences is a task. I am commanded to tell the story, I will try. Dinner comes and there is a box along with my dinner. As I open the box the first thing I see is a kipah. I kiss it and say "Baruch Ha Shem." I am a Reconstructionist Jew. A woman who feels wrapped in G-d's love when I wear a tallit. A woman who feels the division between Holy sacred time and ordinary time when I put on a kipah. Dayeinu. It would be enough if I got no other gift on this night save this kipah. My cellmate and my two friends from down the hall have agreed to be a part of this celebration. I let them start their meal while I unpack more wondrous gifts. It would have been enough to have all the Seder food to put on a plain plastic plate, but I have a Seder plate too. Michelle has promised me a copy of the Haggadah from the domestic violence Seder. She mailed it on Thursday. What are the chances that I would receive it by today? Nonetheless it is here in Friday's mail. Dayeinu. It would have been enough to have the more traditional Haggadah that came in the box, but I have two. I will read from both.

The table is set. My Passover guests have eaten. There will be no whining about, "When do we eat?" They clean up. We are ready. I recite the order. I tell them we will wash each other's hands. I read, "...We allow ourselves to receive as well as give..." They line up. It's a little chaotic. They are like children who want to do the right thing but unsure of exactly what that might be. I wash the first pair of hands and we change places. She is now the washer; I am at the end of the line. There is a collective, "Oh." They not only get the mechanics of how it's done, they feel the blessing. I can hear it in their single utterance. We move on. When we get to the breaking of the Matzah I explain the tradition of hiding it. I tell them how the children look for it and negotiate to give it back so we can finish the Seder. I miss my daughter with intense longing in this moment. I prepare to move on. They stop me, "So do you want to hide it," they say. "Do you want me to," I ask. "Put it in the box so it is hidden from view," they tell me. I smile at them and my heart is moved by the honor they show me. I place the Afikoman in the box. As is suggested from the Haggadah for women who have experienced domestic violence we each write a gift that we can offer to someone. We hide these gifts for later too.

Asking the four questions is the hardest part of this ritual for me. For the past three years my daughter has chanted this piece. Her Hebrew improved each year and last year she could do all the questions with very little help from me. I can hear her voice in my head and the longing and missing of her stick in my throat. I have warned my guests at the beginning that there would be tears and that is as it should be at a Seder. There will also be joy I told them. I didn't know how much. After all, at this point in the Seder I have already received blessings from those who made sure that I received these gifts to hold the Seder and my guests are here with me hearing this story. We have discussion, we share the reading, and they ask their own questions. Dayeinu. We read from the Haggadah from women who have experienced domestic violence, "...right here, right now. This is enough. No one is yelling at me. No one is calling me names. No one is threatening me. Dayeinu!" I stand to hug each of my guests. Thank you for sharing this Seder with me. One of my guests has eaten some egg and some horseradish just for me. One guest has been a source of friendship

and coping strategies over these past 94 days. One guest has cleaned the ceiling lamp in my honor. All of us will experience people who will take three steps back way from us when they learn we have been in jail. They won't ask why or how it came to be so. For some of the members of the larger society the fact of being in jail will be enough to make us pariahs, even if we weren't convicted. Yet these are the women who honor me this Passover.

As I announce that it is time to conclude our Seder and that normally we would look for the Afikoman, one woman grabs the box where we put the matzah out of our view. She runs around rattling the trashcan, shuffling through the books, pretending to be hunting for the Afikoman. It is a joyful ruse and another gift. I laugh and the feelings of home are remembered in my whole body. Finally "finding" the prize she comes to negotiate. The Afikoman is returned for one kool-aid, one apple, and one orange. Even the guard has given me the time I need to conclude this celebration.

Next year in Jerusalem!

---

## **EYES**

When I was with my abuser, in order to survive, I became who and what he wanted me to be. Over 15 years, I gradually lost who I was. I lost access to my feelings, desires, opinions, and preferences. By the time I left, I had no idea who I was or what I liked or disliked or wanted. It was a dark time in my life.

But, as I left, I started to look at the world through new eyes. At the grocery store, I chose foods I liked and left behind the ones I used to buy for him that I didn't like, but ate anyway, just to avoid rocking the boat. I looked at everything I saw and reevaluated it, trying to find what was meaningful to me. Sometimes I still find myself looking at things through those old eyes – his superimposed over mine, but often I recognize it before much time has passed, and refocus for a moment looking again with my own eyes. It's a relief to see the world, the beautiful colors, animals, plants, people, community, Judaism, and to be able to appreciate it without fear of consequences for disagreeing with my abuser. It's a relief to see reality for myself.

I pray that those still enslaved by domestic violence will someday be free to see the world through their own eyes. Blessed art thou, our God, who frees the captive and helps the blind to see.



## **Shabbos in Egypt**

For guidance, I went to the techniques and places that had served me well in other difficult situations in my life. I tried reasoning with him, but reason failed. I tried teaching by example, but my efforts were met with contempt. Patience and calmness were called in, and these also failed. We went for marital counseling, but the therapist failed to diagnose the problem. The therapist insisted I take responsibility for what she termed “my part,” and that I work with him on his “anger management problem.”

I refused to accept responsibility for his behavior – she labeled me “resistant to therapy” and joined my husband in the blame game. She recommended medication for my depression – which in effect meant that medication was necessary to live with my husband. She colluded with him in blaming me. She failed to take action when I was bruised and scalded and denied care. In the end she told me in effect that it would be my fault, if the marriage failed. I refused to go to her office again.

The next time he shoved me into a wall, I dove for the phone. The police arrived quickly. They named the problem and arrested him on two counts of domestic violence. The marriage or rather the sham appearance of one, ended on that sunny Shabbat morning.

*Pikuah nefesh* is everyone’s job, and it is the right and the obligation of every woman to save herself and her children. Understand that the marriage vows were broken long ago.

---

## **Strength**

A reminder to those still held captive by belief in their abuser:

Know you are strong

He would not have wanted to dominate you had you been otherwise

As much as you give your power to him by your fear;

Know that he needs your power to keep you captive.

Taking back your power may and probably will result in punishment

But it is the first step on your journey to freedom.

## **The River Roars**

Life winds and bends down a complex river. The river is like no other. Swift rapid water, jagged rocks, and foamy white froth. Safe to look ahead, afraid to look behind. Afraid still yet to see the shattered dreams, the sticks, the splinters, the cracks of our home with two dear children needing their roof, their foundation and me, their mother grappling to rebuild a new foundation.

Always paddling with strength and courage to rest a moment in a quiet eddy and calm before venturing again into the river to be battered, knocked and bopped about, trying so hard to steer a course of spirit, life, growth, but crying with the turns, the bends, the resistance, the exhaustion of trying yet again to release the river, to land in a lake, to float calmly and look at the sky and see another hope. With pain, the roar of the river rushes past our ears, breezes past our heart.

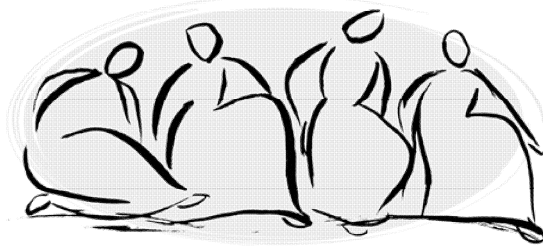
The pain and the glory to have arrived at last.

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## **My Blessing**

The river of life is rapid,  
May you have strength to jump in,  
May you have courage to steer,  
May you have soul to persist,  
May those you love call your name,  
May you join hands with your friends,  
May you trust in your heart.

## **LEAVING EGYPT**



### **Blessing for Leaving Egypt**

Blessed art thou, our God,  
Who gives us courage to take care of ourselves,  
Who sustains us through the trials we must endure to become free,  
And who creates community to support us and lift us  
When we are fragile and in need of help.  
Blessed art thou, our God,  
Who allows us to choose to receive help from our generous community.

---

### **To Walk With Dignity In Truth**

It was obvious that the Israelites were slaves. Nowadays enslavement can be subtle. We first have to acknowledge the truth of our captivity. Speak that truth, and every other truth to which you awaken.

Taking the courage to say you are oppressed is also telling the world that your abuser is acting shamefully. Your silence is his accomplice.

Once you have spoken, the path becomes clearer, and your footing is more secure. No one guarantees the path to be easy, but in walking in Truth, there is company. Though there may be losses, many of us are walking this same path and there is strength and encouragement in numbers. We owe it to our children and the children of the world to walk with dignity in truth.

## **The Light Ahead**

I see a light.

I am in the dark, but I see a light.

Around me is noise and commotion.

Inside me is fear and dread.

But I see a light.

The noise is familiar, the commotion brings some comfort,

But the light looks inviting.

As I move towards the light, the noise gets louder behind me.

Terror.

As I move towards the light the commotion gets more violent around me.

Anxiety.

But the light seems to beckon me.

So I grab what is most important to me.

My Children? A photograph? A treasure?

And make a run for the light.

Running.

Panting.

Exhausted.

Noise.

Fear.

Anxiety.

Terror.

Dread.

Violence.

Louder. Louder.

Light.

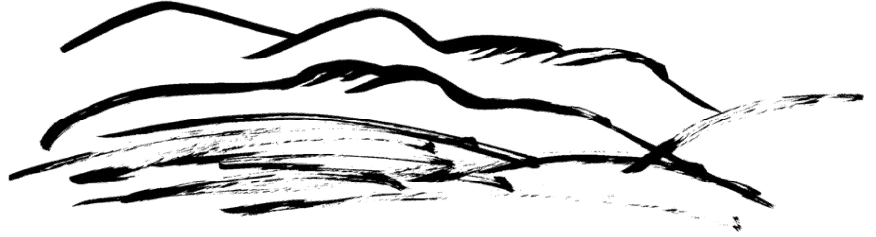
Pure, beautiful, peaceful light.

Amen.

## **IN THE DESERT**

### **The Oasis of Support**

Even though I left my abuser almost two years ago, in some ways I still feel enslaved. I have ongoing health problems as a result of the abuse I experienced. It is a daily, sometimes hourly reminder of all that I have survived.



I recently revealed my health problems to another survivor of domestic violence. Rather than attacking me when I was down, as my abuser had, she offered comfort. A hand on my back meant so much to me. She was supportive of me during my pain, validating, seeing all of me that I had been so afraid to reveal. She did not reject me because I was in pain.

Attending support groups I have felt the same thing – the support and comfort of a community of women who understand my experience, who really get it! There's so much I don't have to explain, so much I need not defend because these women and I have had the same experience and so we understand each other very deeply. Some of the suffering is lessened when I am with these women who truly know me. It is much less painful than trying to handle it alone.

Blessed art thou, our God, creator of community to help us sustain each other through difficult times.

---

### **We Travel Together**

When one finds travel companions is when one learns that one is traveling. If one is very still and very quiet, the desert will yield its beauty – its plants that survive in heat, its colors, its form, its way of being.

From the desert, one can learn patience, fortitude, and the necessity to find companions, as one will not survive alone.

Help me to wander slowly, to treasure the journey more than the destination. Help me to be quiet, to listen, to see what is around me. Help me to understand the value of a grain of sand, and to hold the world in my hand.

## **Wandering**

We still wander. Whether we are out of the abusive relationship, fighting for our lives and our power, or just realizing that we are included in this statistic, we still wander. Wander to find a piece of our heart that can still trust, wander to have a voice, wander to make sense of how this could happen to someone “like me”.

But don’t forget, we wander on this journey together. You are not alone.

---

## **Egypt in the Desert**

Each year we tell the story. In each generation we make the story our own. Before I can begin to tell the story this year, I remember the story from last year. Last year from jail I told how I had to leave. I left Mitzrayim, but I told about it from jail. I was in jail for fleeing, jailed for fleeing his oppression. I was in jail because I fled in an attempt to keep us safe.

Sitting here among you today, I remember thinking about you last year. I remember dreaming, hoping, to be among you. Praying for release. I have been at liberty to wander for nine months. I have wandered through the justice system and stumbled through the lies and torment. A desert path should be clear, there’s not that much to bump into, but I can’t see that far ahead. I am thinking about freedom, celebrating freedom and I am feeling lost.

I had to keep us safe, I fled Mitzrayim and it was good. Then there was jail and separation. There was longing and a community torn apart. For eleven months I waited to see my child. I am free from jail, but she is back in Mitzrayim. For a tiny fraction of the week I get to see her and give her tools to keep her safe.

I am out here in this desert and I don’t know where we will end up. I am grateful for the arms that hold me when I have to stop and cry. I am humbled by your faith in me that I can continue on. I can’t see how far we’ve come; the constant wind blows our footprints away. I can’t see where we are going; there is no vantage point. Once for a brief time when we first left Mitzrayim we walked in beauty and grace. Holy One lead us there again.

## **Desert Offerings**

The desert is a challenge. To have dust and sand, where before there were towns and villages. To have drought where there were floods. To feel alone and to feel hopeless and to feel desolate. This is one's entrance into the desert. Then time passes. There are small life sustaining plants. One only needs enough. The excess evaporates. With others, solutions are found more rapidly, the minds of many create more solutions, more options, and more resolutions. When one cannot go on any further, community and friends say one cannot stay behind and you must go on.

As you go forward the desert offers its own lushness, blooms in the desert, wildlife, the rare rain or morning dew.

## **APPROACHING THE PROMISED LAND**

### **L'Shana Ha-Ba-Ah**

God, bless this place

This place of safety

This place of quietude

This place of peace

Bless my home

Bless my home where I can just be

My home where I can laugh

My home where I can play

Bless the earth and fill it

With healing

With compassion

And with love.

Next year

May every new moon find you smiling.

May every Shabbos find you restful.



---

### **Blessings**

Blessed art the community to which we belong.

Blessed art our own souls, which belong to us.

Blessed art the gifts that arise within, grow in strength, and are shared with others.

Blessed art others who give us love.



## **Promised Land Dialogue**

*What would you do if you were not afraid?*

I can't imagine it.

*What if you could imagine it?*

It's so far away, so deep down inside. I don't know how I could be not afraid while he still exists and still makes efforts to hurt me and my daughter.

*What if you were shielded and his efforts to hurt you and your child always missed the mark?*

Then I would be relieved but I wouldn't trust it at first. He'd have to miss the mark at least a hundred times before I would be sure we were safe. But then I'd know I had succeeded, somehow, in taking back my own power, in meeting my needs and the needs of my child, in trusting myself to be able to survive.

*What then?*

Then I'd thrive!

---

## **The Prophetess**

For the ones who came before me, the women who made things better, the women who created the support groups, the shelters, the hospital protocols, the legal protections -- all that was there for me when I arrived in this frozen land -- for those women -- I want to make things better for the women who will come after me.

## **Blooming**

You are a child of nature, unique in your presence. Special in your gifts. You are a wonder and allow time for everyone to see your lights, your gifts, your creativity, your strengths, and your love.

You can join a field of flowers, but you cannot be cut and put in a vase again. Your roots are strong. Let the soil nurture you, recognize the nutrients surrounding you, food for the heart, nurture your soul and you will return in strength and glory to the world, to where you belong. Your soul will be your own, your gifts and strengths will belong to all.

---

## **Peace In The Land**

Peace in the land would be a place of warmth, and smiles, laughter, tears, joy and embrace. Peace in the land would be strong children who believe in themselves and learn not to insult or hurt others. Peace in the land would be to have kids who believe in love and courage. My peace in the land would be to stop trying so hard. To be respected, to be embraced and given comfort when in pain, to find calm. To have a home that won't quake. A home that is safe. A home that is solid. To find my soul in peace.

---

## **A Woman Who Can**

I am a woman who can prune a tree.  
I am a woman who can knit.  
I am a woman who can cook a fabulous vegetarian meal.  
I am a woman who struggles.  
I am a woman who fails.  
I am a woman who falls down and struggles to get up again.  
But I do get up.  
I am a woman who walks with God.

## Appendix I

### From the 2001 Writing Workshop:

#### 1. **KARPAS:**

**From the Tradition:** We dip a green vegetable (e.g., parsley) in salt water. The salt water represents the tears of slavery. The greens represent the renewal of spring.

**Our Seder Theme:** Tears/Renewal

**Writing Ideas:**

- At what point along your journey did immersing yourself in tears bring renewal?
- When has crying been purifying or cathartic for you?
- What prayer would you like to utter when dipping greens into salt water?

#### 2. **PESACH:**

**From the Tradition:** The paschal lamb, sacrificed on the eve of the Exodus. The lamb's blood on the doors of the Israelites safeguarded them from being killed.

**Our Seder Theme:** What we gave up to survive / Sacrifice

**Writing Ideas:**

- Describe a sacrifice you made in order to survive.
- What sacrifices do you continue to make in order to survive?
- What have you gained from your sacrifices?

#### 3. **MATZAH:**

**From the Tradition:** The unleavened bread our ancestors baked. They did not have time to let the dough rise before they fled Egypt.

**Our Seder Theme:** What we must have to survive / Survival

**Writing Ideas:**

- Matzah represents the minimum we needed for survival. What was the minimum you needed for survival?
- Where have you found the sustenance you need to survive?
- The Israelites carried the matzah with them into the desert. How have you carried your coping skills, your sustenance with you?
- How do you make do with not enough?

#### 4. **MAROR:**

**From the Tradition:** The maror (bitter herbs) reminds us of the bitterness of slavery that our ancestors endured.

**Our Seder Theme:** What we need to remember to continue to survive / Memory

**Writing Ideas:**

- What memories help you to focus on safety, on survival?
- Why is it important for you to remember the abuse, to reflect on what happened?
- How can painful reminders be a blessing to us? If they are a blessing, what words should we say to bless them?

### **From the 2002 Writing Workshop:**

*Every Journey Brings Blessings: Creating Our Own Blessings Along the Journey*

#### 1. **IN EGYPT:**

**From the Tradition:** “And they embittered their lives with hard labor in mortar and bricks, with every servitude of the field, with torment.” (Exodus 1:14)

**Our Seder Theme:** We have experienced abuse. We don’t have to live this way.

**Writing Ideas:**

- What did you do to survive domestic violence?
- When looking back to the time of abuse, in spite of all the oppression that was inflicted upon you, were there any blessings that came out of that experience?
- What is your prayer for those still enslaved by domestic violence?

#### 2. **LEAVING EGYPT:**

**From the Tradition:** The Israelites escaped from the pursuing Egyptians and “then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels.” (Exodus 15:20-21)

**Our Seder Theme:** We can create change. We have options.

**Writing Ideas:**

- If you were a prophetess leading other women out of the enslavement of domestic violence, what would you say to encourage them in their journey?
- Write a blessing for leaving domestic violence.

### 3. **IN THE DESERT:**

**From the Tradition:** “The wilderness is not just a desert through which we wandered for forty years. It is a way of being. Even if just for a moment every now and then each day.” (Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, *Honey From the Rock*)

**Our Seder Theme:** We are in transition. We can heal.

**Writing Ideas:**

- Where do you find sustenance when you are in the desert?
- What does it mean to you to be part of a community wandering in the desert rather than wandering alone?
- Write a blessing for wandering.

### 4. **APPROACHING THE PROMISED LAND:**

**From the Tradition:** “I will give you peace in the land, and you will lie down, and no one will make you afraid.” (Leviticus 26:6)

**Our Seder Theme:** We are moving forward. We will create a better world. We will achieve liberation.

**Writing Ideas:**

- What would you do if you were not afraid?
- Describe what “peace in the land” would look like.
- Write a blessing that you would like to say upon reaching the promised land.
- “*L’Shanah haba’ah b’yerushalayim...* May we celebrate together as a free people next year in Jerusalem.” (From the concluding section of the Haggadah).
- Write a blessing to conclude our Haggadah. What do you want for next year?

## Glossary

**Ableism** – Discrimination against individuals who are living with a disability. The creation and perpetuation of societal structures and institutions with the assumption that everyone is able bodied. Also used to refer to the belief that those who are not fully able-bodied are somehow inferior.

**Adonai** – One of the ways in which Jews refer to God.

**Adulthood** – The creation and perpetuation of societal structures and institutions geared towards adults to the exclusion of children.

**Ageism** – Discrimination of people based upon their age.

**Afikoman (“Ah-fee-ko-man”)** – This special piece of matzah is considered the final “dessert” of the meal and is the last thing that is eaten at the seder. The middle of the three ceremonial layers of matzah is broken early on in the seder. The larger half becomes the afikoman. It is customary to hide the afikoman and then search for it.

**Antisemitism** – Discrimination, hostility, or hatred against Jews and the Jewish people. Although a Semite is a member of any group speaking a Semitic language or their descendants, the term was created specifically to refer to Jews.

**Bareich** – The section of the seder during which the *Birkat Hamazon* (Grace After Meals) is recited.

**Baruch HaShem** – Blessed is God.

**Beitzah** – One of the items on the seder plate. It is a hard-boiled egg that is usually roasted. This symbolizes springtime and rebirth.

**Charoset** – One of the items on the seder plate. It is a mixture of apples, nuts, wine, and cinnamon. The color and texture of this mixture reminds us of the mortar that the Israelites used to make bricks while they were in slavery. The sweetness is also a reminder of the sweetness of freedom.

**Classism** – The existence of societal structures and institutions that maintain divisions among people based on economic resources, ownership of property, social status, family and marital ties, educational level, and occupation. Those in the upper and middle classes benefit from the perpetuation of an under class, and from the mythology that those in lower classes are in that position because they are inferior.

**Dayeinu** – Literally translates as “enough.” The song Dayeinu is sung during the seder. It lists the many gifts with which the Israelites were blessed, stating that any one of these would have been enough.

**Domestic Violence** – Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that an adult or adolescent uses to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. The behaviors can be physical, sexual, psychological, and/or economic. Domestic violence is a learned pattern of behaviors.

**Elijah** – (also called *Eliyahu Ha-Navi*, Elijah the prophet) – A prophet from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. It is believed that he will announce the coming of a messianic time in which the world will be at peace. It is customary to open the door during the seder to symbolically welcome him into our homes.

**Elijah’s cup** – It is customary to place a special cup of wine on the seder table for Elijah.

**Four Cups of Wine** – (Hebrew: *Arba Kosot*) – During the seder, we drink four cups of wine or grape juice to remind us of the four ways in which the Torah promises liberation from slavery in Egypt. The book of Exodus provides: I will bring you out of Egypt; I will deliver you from their bondage; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm; I will take you to Me for a people.

**Haggadah** – Literally translates as “the telling.” A text that serves as a guide through the seder. It includes the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt as told in the Torah and discussed in the Talmud, as well as prayers and traditional songs. There are many different Haggadot, reflecting the diversity of Jewish communities world-wide.

**Hallel** – Literally translates as “praise.” A collection of Psalms (113-118 and 136) which are sung during the seder.

**Heterosexism** – The existence of societal structures and institutions that maintain the assumption that all people are heterosexual and provide privilege and benefits to those who identify as heterosexual. This system includes the denial of the existence of people who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer.

**Hillel Sandwich** – This sandwich made of matzah, maror, and charoset, is attributed in the Talmud to Rabbi Hillel. We eat the Hillel sandwich at the seder to remind us of both the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom.

**Homophobia** – Discrimination, hostility, fear of, or hatred against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.

**Imperialism** – The policy and practice of one nation that dominates, economically and/or politically, another in order to profit from that nation’s goods, services, labor, land, and resources.

**Israelite** – Biblical description of the descendants of Jacob, whose name became Israel.

**Judaism** – A term used to describe the faith and beliefs of the Jewish people.

**Karpas** –Vegetables eaten during the Passover seder to symbolize springtime and rebirth. Green vegetables, such as parsley, lettuce, or celery are usually used.

**Kiddush** - Literally translates as “sanctification.” It is the name for the blessing over wine that is said during Shabbat (the Sabbath) and festivals.

**L’shanah Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim** – Literally translates as “Next Year in Jerusalem.” This expression traditionally concludes the seder and communicates the Jewish people’s hope for a messianic time of peace in Jerusalem and throughout the world.

**Makom Kadosh** – Literally translates as “a holy place.”

**Maror** – Bitter herbs, usually horseradish, eaten at the seder as a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and the suffering of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

**Matzah** – Unleavened bread, eaten during the seder and throughout Passover, to commemorate the bread that the Israelites baked in haste when they were leaving Egypt.

**Miriam** – Biblical heroine, prophet, and sister of Moses and Aaron. She led the women in song after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on their way out of Egypt.

**MiSheberach** – Prayers offered for healing, special occasions, and performance of *mitzvot*, such as being called to the Torah.

**Mitzrayim** – Literally translates as “a narrow place.” Hebrew name for Egypt.

**Mitzvah** (plural *mitzvot*) – Literally translates as “commandment.” Often interpreted as a sacred obligation and/or a good deed.

**Motzi Matzah** – This portion of the seder includes two blessings for the eating of matzah.

**Nirtza** – The concluding portion of the seder during which we offer thanks for reaching this day.

**Passover** (Hebrew: **Pesach**) – Jewish festival of freedom commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Traditionally observed for 7 or 8 days depending on practice, during which time food made from leavened products is not eaten.

**Plagues** – Described in the Torah as the 10 afflictions that God inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptian people in order to compel them to set the Israelites free. When we read the plagues aloud during the seder, we remove a drop of wine or juice from our glass for each plague. This act symbolizes taking away from our own happiness because we do not wish suffering upon others. The ten plagues traditionally recited are 1) **Dam (Blood)** the water of the Nile and throughout Egypt was turned to blood; 2) **Tzefardea (Frogs)** the land of Egypt was infested by frogs; 3) **Kinnim (Lice)** the Egyptians and their animals became infested with lice; 4) **Arov (Hordes of Beasts)** hordes of beasts roamed Egypt, ruining the land 5) **Dever (Cattle Disease)** the livestock of the Egyptians died; 6) **Shehin (Boils)** the Egyptians were covered in boils; 7) **Barad (Hail)** Hailstorms destroyed and killed Egyptian land and people; 8) **Arbeh (Locusts)** These animals destroyed the land; 9) **Hoshekh (Darkness)** the land of Egypt was covered in a blanket of night, and 10) **Makkat Bekhorot (Death of the First Born)** All first-born Egyptians, including Pharaoh’s own son, were killed. After this plague Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

**Promised Land** – Refers to the biblical promise that Abraham’s descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, now Israel. In this Haggadah, the Promised Land is a metaphor for the achievement of liberation.

**Rabbi** – Literally translates as “my teacher.” A Jewish leader, scholar, and teacher of Jewish law, text and practice who has received rabbinical ordination.

**Racism** – The existence of societal structures and institutions that maintains divisions and distributes power and privilege based on race. Inherent within racism is the belief that one race is superior to another.

**Rahtza** – The portion of the seder in which we wash our hands and recite the blessing.

**Refuah Shelemah** – Literally translates as “a complete healing.” This phrase is used in connection with the offering of prayers on behalf of those who are physically and spiritually in need of healing.

**Seder** – Literally translates as “order.” The Passover ritual is a unique mix of liturgy, text, storytelling, singing and symbolic food. These are utilized so that children and other participants will ask about and learn of the exodus of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. The seder is designed to help each participant feel as if s/he were personally liberated from Egypt and to raise awareness of current struggles for liberation.

**Seder Plate** – On the table, a plate is arranged with traditional foods that symbolize different aspects of Passover. These are Maror (Bitter Herbs), Karpas (Green Vegetable), Z’roa (Shankbone or beet), Beitzah (Hard boiled egg), Charoset (mix of apples, nuts, wine, and cinnamon). (See definitions of each term for more information). Some seders now include an orange on the seder plate. A variety of stories surround the addition of the orange. One is that a rabbi said that “a woman belongs on the *bimah* (stage in the sanctuary) like an orange belongs on the seder plate.” Another version is that the rabbi was likening the inclusion of gay men and lesbians in the Jewish community to an orange on the seder plate. In response, many have added the orange to show that all are valued in the Jewish community.



**Sexism** – The existence of societal structures and institutions that maintain divisions and distribute power and privilege based on gender. Inherent within sexism is the belief that males are superior to females.

**Shekhina** – From the root shin-khaf-nun, which literally translates as “to dwell.” Shekhina often refers to the feminine presence of God. It is the name for God associated with God’s nearness to humanity.

**Sheheheyanu** – A blessing that expresses gratitude for having been given life and for reaching a new stage or important moment in life.

**Sh’mā** – From the root shin-mem-ayin, which literally translates as “to listen or to hear.” Declaration of faith included in the daily liturgy. See Deuteronomy 6: 4.

**Shomrot** – Literally translates as “guards/guardians.” Feminine plural noun form.

**Shulkhan Orekh** – Literally translates as “set table.” Within the context of Passover, it refers to the festive meal served during the seder.

**Talmud** – Literally translates as “study.” Term used to refer to a collection of texts that form the basis for Jewish law. These include the Mishnah, the first codification of Jewish laws, and the Gemara, a commentary on the laws of the Mishnah.

**Tefilat Haderekh** – Literally translates as “prayer of the road or way.” It is the prayer said before traveling to ask for a safe journey.

**Torah** – Literally translates as “instruction.” Torah refers to the five books of Moses, which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, as well as the parchment scroll upon which the text is handwritten. The word Torah is also used to refer to Jewish teachings in general.

**Tzafun** – The portion of the seder of finding and retrieving the afikoman.

**Urchatz** – The portion of the seder in which we wash our hands without reciting a blessing.

**Xenophobia** – Discrimination, hostility, fear of, or hatred against strangers or foreigners.

**Yachatz** – The portion of the seder in which we break the middle matzah in half. The larger half becomes the afikoman.

**Z’roa** – One of the items on the seder plate, it is a roasted shank-bone. It reminds us of the paschal lamb that was eaten on Passover during ancient times in Jerusalem when sacrifices were offered at the Temple, before its destruction in 70 C.E. It also reminds us of the tenth plague in which the Egyptian first-born were killed; the Israelites were spared of this plague because they marked their homes with the blood of the lamb as a sign to the Angel of Death to pass over their home. Some people choose to substitute a beet for the shank-bone.

# Resources

## **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **National Domestic Violence Hotline:**

A toll-free, 24-hours a day, 365 days a year hotline with a database of more than 4,000 shelters and service providers across the United States, Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bilingual staff and a language line are available for every non-English speaking caller. Deaf abused women can also find help at the Hotline by calling the TTY line.

(800) 799-SAFE (7233)

(800) 787-3224 (TTY)

[www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

### **FaithTrust Institute:**

FaithTrust Institute is an inter-religious educational resource addressing the religious issues of sexual and domestic violence. Our goal is to engage religious leaders in the task of ending abuse and to prepare human services professionals to recognize and attend to the religious questions and issues that may arise in their work with women and children in crisis. Our emphasis is on education and prevention.

2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 200

Seattle, WA 98102

(206) 634-1903

[www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)

### **Jewish Women International:**

Jewish Women International (JWI), founded in 1897 as B'nai B'rith Women, is dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence through education, advocacy and action – locally, nationally and around the world. JWI maintains a national resource directory of domestic violence victim services and advocacy programs found in Jewish community.

2000 M Street, NW Suite 720

Washington, DC 20036

(800) 343-2823

[www.jewishwomen.org](http://www.jewishwomen.org)

### **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV):**

NCADV is dedicated to the empowerment of battered women and their children and therefore is committed to the elimination of personal and societal violence in the lives of battered women and their children.

P.O. Box 18749

Denver, CO 80218

(303) 839-1852

[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

## **RESOURCES ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

- Gardsbane, Diane, ed., *Embracing Justice: A Resource Guide for Rabbis on Domestic Abuse*, Jewish Women International, 2002.
- Gardsbane, Diane, ed., *Healing And Wholeness: A Resource Guide on Domestic Abuse in The Jewish Community*, Jewish Women International, 2002,
- Graetz, Naomi, *Silence Is Deadly: Judaism Confronts Wifebeating*, Jason Aronson Publishers, 1998.
- Fortune, Rev. Dr. Marie M., ed., *Journal of Religion And Abuse*, The Haworth Pastoral Press.
- Center for The Prevention of Sexual And Domestic Violence, *To Save A Life: Ending Domestic Violence in Jewish Families*, Michi Pictures, 1997 (35 minute video and facilitator's guide).
- Twerski, Abraham J., *The Shame Born in Silence: Spouse Abuse in The Jewish Community*, Mirkov Publication Inc., 1997.

## **JEWISH RESOURCES**

- Adler, Rachel, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*, Beacon Press, 1999.
- Friedman, Dayle A., *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional And Contemporary Sources*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.
- Gottlieb, Lynn, *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism*. San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1995.
- Greenberg, Irving, *The Jewish Way: Living The Holidays*, Simon & Schuster Trade Paperbacks, 1993.
- Levy, Naomi, *To Begin Again: The Journey Toward Comfort, Strength, and Faith in Difficult Times*, Ballantine Books, 1998.
- [www.ritualwell.org](http://www.ritualwell.org): Ceremonies for Jewish Living
- Sponsored by: Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies and Mayan, The Jewish Women's Project, a program of the JCC in Manhattan.
- Strassfeld, Michael, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide And Commentary*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1985.
- Waskow, Arthur, *Seasons of Our Joy: A Modern Guide to The Jewish Holidays*, Beacon Press, 1990.

## **GENERAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ADVOCACY, AND HEALING**

- Creighton, Alan and Paul Kivel, *Helping Teens Stop Violence*, Hunter House Inc., Publishers, 2001.
- Creighton, Allan and Paul Kivel. *Young Men's Work. Stopping Violence and Building Community* Hunter House Inc., Publishers, 2001.
- Evans, Patricia, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Adams Media Corporation, 1992.
- Herman, Judith Lewis, *Trauma And Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, BasicBooks, 1997.
- Hilsen-Bernard, Wendy, *A Woman's Place: The Compassionate Guide for Reclaiming Body, Mind, And Life*, Still River Resources LLC, 2001.

Jones, Ann, and Susan Schechter, *When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right*, Perennial (HarperCollins), 1997.

Jones, Ann, *Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering And How To Stop It*, Beacon Press, 1984.

Kivel, Paul, *Boys Will Be Men: Raising Our Sons for Courage, Caring, and Community*, Hunter House Inc., Publishers, 1999.

Kivel, Paul, *I Can Make My World A Safer Place: A Kid's Book About Stopping Violence*, Hunter House Inc., Publishers, 2001.

Levy, Barry, ed., *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*, Seal Press, 1991.

Myhand, M. Well, and Paul Kivel, *Young Women's Lives: Building Self-Awareness for Life*, Hunter House Inc., Publishers, 2001.

NiCarthy, Ginny, *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse And Take Back Your Life*, Seal Press, 1982.